

Dear Members of Labor and Public Employees Committee of the Connecticut General Assembly:

My name is Carol J. Williams and I live in Willimantic, Connecticut. I support H.B. 6380: *An Act Concerning Disclosure of Salary Range for a Vacant Position*.

I am testifying on behalf of the Women and Girls Funds Task Force on Public Policy which I chair for the Community Foundation of Eastern Connecticut. We advocate for policies that will improve life for women and girls in CT but especially in Eastern Connecticut, the poorest and least well-educated part of the State. Therefore, we are especially concerned about the wage gap in CT where women earn on average \$0.84 cents for every dollar paid to men, a gap that is even greater for women of color. This wage gap persists across almost all occupations and industries.

H.B 6380 will move the State further toward a level playing field for Connecticut women. I worked at Eastern Connecticut State University for 35 years as Associate Dean of the School of Continuing Education which served returning adult students who needed to complete a bachelor's degree in order to get ahead in their careers. Distressingly for me, since I devoted my career to helping adult students advance in their careers by getting a bachelor's degree, research shows that one year after college graduation, women are earning an unexplained 7% less than their male counterparts.

Over the years, I worked with hundreds of working adult students both men and women. As I got to know these students and learned about their career paths, it was obvious to me that women were much less likely than the men I worked with to negotiate for salary increases in the initial stages of hiring and also once they were employed. For these working women students, salary was the most important financial issue they faced, directly impacting every other financial decision for themselves and their families. Had these women had access to the salary range for a particular job they would, I'm sure, have been more likely to negotiate for a fair wage.

Research validates what I observed among our students. Studies show that women often ask for less when they negotiate than men even when they are otherwise equally qualified, however, when job applicants are clearly informed about the context for negotiations - including the range and types of compensation and benefits available - women are more willing to negotiate and are more successful in negotiating, which reduces the gender wage gap. In the public sector, where agencies typically operate within transparent and public pay structure, the wage gap is much narrower. This is further evidence that greater pay transparency will reduce wage disparities. When employers hold all of the salary information, they are at a significant advantage in negotiating the lowest possible salary. This causes women and people of color to lose out most.

The current COVID-19 pandemic has further exacerbated the gender wage gap due to the overrepresentation of women, especially women of color, in jobs on the frontlines of the crisis. For example, Women make up 85% of home health and personal care aides, but lose \$5,000 per year to the gender wage gap. Ninety-three percent (93%) of child care workers

are women, and 44% of them are women of color. They lose \$5,000 a year to the gender wage gap.

Women's earnings are critical to their families' economic security and larger economic growth.

More than 170,000 family households in Connecticut are headed by women. Roughly 24% of those families, or 40,431 family households, earn incomes that fall below the poverty level. Further, nearly 50% of female headed households in CT under age 65 live within the ALICE threshold, with earnings above poverty level but below what's needed to meet a family's basic needs such as health care, housing, child care, and transportation. Women's earnings are critical to economic growth: if women received equal pay, the United States economy would produce additional income of \$512.6 billion.

H.B. 6380 also Requires Equal Pay for Comparable Work. This requirement will modernize the existing "equal pay for equal work" standard which was drafted to cover women working in manufacturing jobs who performed tasks identical to the person next to them on the factory floor. This standard was effective at eliminating gendered pay scales for factory workers that existed at the time the language was written, but since then courts haven't adapted the law for realities of the modern workplace. "Comparable work" addresses inequity in pay that results from a long history of sex-segregated occupations and different pay scales for jobs considered traditionally male vs. those considered traditionally female. This language mirrors legislation passed in 10 states, most recently in Massachusetts. In some states, this language has been on the books for decades.

I strongly support H.B. 6380. I hope the Committee and Connecticut lawmakers will vote favorably this year to ensure that women in Connecticut are paid what they deserve.

Thank you for your time, Carol J. Williams